

2020 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 16

BY REPRESENTATIVE SCHEXNAYDER AND SENATORS ABRAHAM, ALLAIN, BERNARD, CARTER, CATHEY, CLOUD, CONNICK, CORTEZ, FESI, FIELDS, FOIL, HENSGENS, HEWITT, JOHNS, LAMBERT, LUNEAU, MCMATH, MILLIGAN, ROBERT MILLS, MIZELL, MORRIS, PEACOCK, POPE, REESE, TALBOT, TARVER, WARD, WHITE, AND WOMACK

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To commend Madame Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson of the Louisiana Supreme Court on the occasion of her retirement from the court.

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson is the Louisiana Supreme Court's twenty-fifth Chief Justice, its second female Chief Justice, and its first African-American Chief Justice; and

WHEREAS, Bernette Johnson was born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana; she attended Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and received a bachelor of arts degree in political science in 1964; after graduating from Spelman College, she became one of the first African-American women to study law at the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where she received her juris doctorate degree in 1969; and

WHEREAS, upon completion of her law school studies, she took a position as the managing attorney with the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation and provided legal services to more than three thousand individuals in economically deprived neighborhoods; she also served as a civil litigator in the federal and state district courts and juvenile courts, working to advance the rights of children, the poor, the elderly, and the disenfranchised; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, she joined the New Orleans city attorney's staff and later became a deputy city attorney for New Orleans; during this time, she gained significant trial experience in the Civil District Court and U.S. District Court defending the city against claims of police brutality and general tort claims; she also served as a supervisor for litigations and appeals involving agencies of the city of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Johnson's judicial career began in 1984, after she became the first woman elected to the Civil District Court of New Orleans; in 1990, she was reelected to her office after running unopposed, and in 1994, her colleagues elected her to the position of chief judge; also in 1994, she was first elected to the Louisiana Supreme Court and was reelected without opposition in 2000 and 2010; she was sworn in as chief justice in 2013; and

WHEREAS, as a civil trial judge, Bernette Johnson was first assigned to the Domestic Relations Court, where she established a system to refer custody, alimony, and child support issues to mediation conducted by certified social workers of the Children's Bureau and Family Services prior to court appearances; and

WHEREAS, as a supreme court justice, Chief Justice Johnson served on the Louisiana Supreme Court's Judicial Council, the Louisiana Supreme Court's Legal Services Task Force, and the National Campaign on Best Practices in the area of Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts; she has worked closely with the Louisiana Supreme Court's Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Committee and the Committee on Bar Admissions, and she was the Supreme Court's appointee to the Louisiana State Law Institute; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Johnson has received countless awards including the prestigious Joan Dempsey Klein Award from the National Association of Women Judges and the Spirit of Excellence Award from the American Bar Association's Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, and she was inducted into the National Bar Association's Hall of Fame and received the association's Distinguished Civil Rights Advocate Award; and

WHEREAS, Madame Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson has worked as an advocate for social justice, civil rights, and community organizing throughout her career, and her truly incredible career is most deserving of the highest praise and recognition.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Madame Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson on her retirement from the Louisiana Supreme Court; does hereby express genuine appreciation for her tireless pursuit of social justice and equality; does hereby recognize her illustrious career and numerous accomplishments; and does hereby extend sincere hopes and wishes for her continued good health and prosperity as she enters into her retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to  
Madame Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson and the Louisiana Supreme Court.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE